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OF A
FUTURE STATE,

And that of the
Soul's Immortality,

Asserted and distinctly proved;

IN TWO
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TO A

FREE-THINKER.

Occasion'd by the Late Duke of
BUCKINGHAM'S EPITAPH.

To which is Prefix'd,

A Version of the EPITAPH. With an Introduction, containing Extracts of two Letters relating to the Conduct of that Noble Lord.

By *RICHARD FIDDES*, D.D.
Late Rector of *HALSHAM*.

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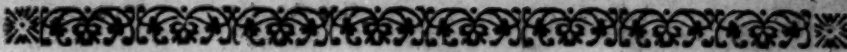
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Pro Rege sæpe, pro Republica semper.

*Dubius, sed non improbus vixi.
Incertus morior, sed inturbatus.
Humanum est errare, & nescire.
Christum adveneror, Deo confido,
Omnipotenti, benevolentissimo.
Ens Entium miserere mei.*

Much for the Prerogative, ever for my Country.

I liv'd irregular, not profligate.
Tho' going to a State *unknown*, I dye resign'd.
Frailty and Ignorance attend on human Life.
Religiously I worship Christ, in God confide
Almighty, and most Merciful.
O thou Principle of all Beings, and first of all
Causes, have Compassion on me.



INTRODUCTION.



THE Prejudices occasioned by this Epitaph, when it first appear'd in the publick Prints, were (by reason of some false Copies of it) so strong and general, that it was not easy to suspect they had not some sort of reasonable foundation. But when I thought there could however be no offence, in considering what might be offer'd, *for private satisfaction*, towards a vindication of those Passages in it which seem'd exceptionable; I was still farther discouraged from making any attempt of this kind, upon advice from some intimate Friends of my own, that certain Persons, whom I highly honour, had given some countenance to the popular Misconstructions of it.

And I will frankly own I was not, without some difficulty, able to persuade my self that any reasons could justify me in underraking what was visibly attended with so great Obstacles, and what might perhaps expose me to censure, where I ought to use the utmost caution towards avoiding the occasions of it.

I was indeed so intimidated with the apprehensions of it, that I had, for a considerable time, laid the Free-thinker's Letter, and my Answer to it, aside, without any intention that they should ever appear in publick.

But a strict regard to truth, after an impartial enquiry, was at last superior to all other considerations: Neither, I hope, with all submission, can any want of due respect to those whose greater abilities I own, be inferr'd on account of my dissenting from them, where their zeal, which is known to be so full of ardour for the honour and interests of Religion, may possibly render any distant appearances of disservice to it more violently suspected.

And I was yet more particularly animated in my design of publishing these Papers by the receipt of two Letters lately communicated to me, relating to the conduct of that noble Peer who was the author and subject of this Inscription.

One of these Letters is from a Lady of the first Quality, but more eminently distinguished by her personal Virtues and Accomplishments; and

and her Testimony being founded upon her own Knowledge, no possible exception can be made to it. In a Letter to a Gentleman who had been pretty much in the confidence of this noble Lord, her words are—*How often he has taken the Sacrament, you and his whole Family knows. His Life has been for many years, I am sure, both regular and devout, and his Charities within these four years not less than an hundred Pounds, sometimes two, to release poor Debtors. This, as I am well assur'd, was only one article of his Charity; besides several generous subscriptions to polite and useful Literature.*

The Gentleman, to whom that Letter was written, is a Man upon whose integrity I can depend, and he wrote thus to my self: *I can assure you that my Lord Duke had constantly Prayers at his own House, and that I was often with his Grace at them; and that, as to the Sacrament, he took it at least four times every year, and sometimes oftner; because whenever the Duchess, by reason of frequent indisposition when she was with child, took it at home, he constantly communicated with her. And farther, I can particularly assure you, he took it at Church six Weeks before his Death.*

How any person, who did not retain in his mind some lively and powerful sense of Religion, and of the Christian Religion, could so frequently, and upon no visible motive,
but

but a conviction of Duty, attend the worship of God, and communicate in the most solemn *instituted* Rite of it! But especially, how such a person could upon any grounds be supposed to question the truth of the *Christian* Revelation in general, let those judge, I do not say, who regulate their judgment by christian Principles, but by the maxims of common Candor and Ingenuity.

I am so far indeed from being conscious of my having exceeded the bounds of truth in the following Answer, that I am apprehensive what I have presumed to offer in defence of this noble Lord, may rather be thought deficient, and particularly what I observed concerning his good dispositions in respect to the holy Sacrament.

It appeared more incumbent on me to attempt a Vindication, imperfect as it might be, of this Epitaph, in honour to the noble Author of it, consider'd as a Person of the first Distinction, who had served his Country through a succession of several Reigns in the first Posts of Authority and Trust; and who in many capacities and characters of a fine Gentleman had few, if any, superior in his own, or in any preceding Age. For tho' I have endeavour'd to shew, by good Reasons, that the Examples of *great Men*, distinguish'd by any extraordinary Endowments, can neither authorize nor excuse a criminal Imitation; yet to weak minds less capable of consulting

sulting the Light of, or which cannot attend to a train of abstract reasoning, it must be acknowledged the ill Examples of such Persons are of very dangerous consequence, and greatly tend to fortify them in their prejudices, against the maxims of a pure and strict Morality. And therefore it would be much better to remove the occasion of such Prejudices, than to answer them. And one method of removing them is to vindicate the Conduct of great Men, so far, but so far only as is really defensible, from unjust imputations cast upon them, whether by ignorant, by mistaken, or designing Persons. An Endeavour to this end is not only honest, but truly laudable, as proceeding both from a principle of Justice to the Injured, and of Benevolence towards Mankind in general, by preventing one common Cause of Scandal and *Offence* to them.

I shall add no more by way of Apology for the following Remarks, or for the publication of them: I only beg leave to observe, that as the great Work with which I am in a manner continually taken up, would not permit me to review them with more care and exactness; so I am obliged, in regard to it, for some little time, to postpone the second part of my Answer, relating to the *Immortality of the Soul*. But I am the more easy upon this account, as having lately proposed a difficulty or two upon that Article, to a very learned Friend, whose candour and communicative dis-

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position

position being equal to his Learning, I hope shortly to receive some farther Light into the Subject, that may be both of use and ornament to my Performance.

The Author of the Letter, for it may be expected I should take some previous notice of him, has endeavour'd to give all the force to his Objections, whereof they seem capable; and, if I mistake not, they are at once proposed in a good light, and brought into a convenient narrow compass. But we have nothing to fear from the Enemies of Religion in a strict way of reasoning. Men may think as freely as they please, provided they think methodically, and, at the same time, with a becoming regard to Authority.

In controverted Points relating to the State, it is granted, that persons entrusted with the Administration, ought not to suffer their sanctions or proceedings to be called in question; much less to be openly ridicul'd or treated with Contempt, under a pretence that Men have a right, a natural and inalienable right of thinking and speaking freely. There are Governments in the World, whose duration would be of very short continuance, were this pretence once publicly admitted as just and reasonable. Why should Men be left more at liberty openly to dispute the Truth of those religious Principles, which have the sanction of the civil Magistrate, and without the Belief of which, no order in Society could well be maintain'd,

maintain'd, nor any Government be long supported?

Of this kind are all those Principles, and especially such as relate to a future State, which are necessary to affect the Conscience. For if *that* have no *feeling*, the most solemn Tests and Securities of civil Obedience will have little or no power to influence the actions of Men, where they can either transgress with secrecy or escape with impunity. What is the reason then, or how shall we be able to discover it, why the civil Magistrate may justly restrain our Liberty in one Case, and yet that it would be a high and notorious Act of Injustice in him to lay any restraint upon it in the other?

Is it because the civil Magistrate is fallible in his decisions relating to speculative Doctrines, that every Man as he sees, or imagines he sees Cause, is free to dispute the reasonableness or expose the folly of them? The civil Magistrate is certainly equally fallible in his civil Decisions. And therefore so far as this Article of Infallibility is, or can be consider'd, the reasons for thinking, and speaking *freely* in both Cases, are, indisputably, equal too.

Is it because God is the sole and sovereign Judge, concerning Articles to be believed, that no regard is to be had to any human Decisions concerning them? Is he not also sole Judge, and in the same extent of Sovereignty,

ty, *in the Kingdoms of Men?* It is therefore equally an invasion of his sovereign and sole right, whether Men assume a power of judging in civil, or in religious Affairs. Has God excluded all Communication of his Power in one Case, and delegated part of it to his Creatures in the other? How does this appear from any express revelation of his Will, or upon what grounds in the reason of the thing? For as to his absolute *Sovereignty*, which is the only Foundation of this Argument, the Inferences from it are undeniably the same in both respects. So that in truth here is an Objection against human Authority advanced, which proves, if it proves any thing, that there is not, nor possibly can be any human Authority, either civil or religious.

But it will not be improper to pursue this Argument in two or three Instances, which may tend to the better illustration of it.

“ God is the sole Judge in the Kingdoms
 “ of Men, yet he never interposeth to con-
 “ veigh Infallibility to those who pretend to
 “ judge in civil Affairs; and who therefore,
 “ in this way of arguing, when they assume
 “ such a Power, rule in their own *Kingdom*,
 “ and not in *his*.

“ It is the *same thing as to Rewards and*
 “ *Punishments to carry forward the great*
 “ *ends of the Kingdom of God in this World.*
 “ *If any Men upon Earth have a right to*
 “ *encrease the number, or alter the nature*
 “ of

“ of the Rewards and Punishments of his
 “ Subjects in civil Matters, *they are so far*
 “ Kings in his stead, and reign in *their own*
 “ Kingdom, and not in *his*. So it is when
 “ they erect *Tribunals*, and exercise a *Judg-*
 “ *ment*, whereby the Bodies or Estates of
 “ Men in civil Life may be affected; this is
 “ so far the taking the *Kingdom of God* out
 “ of *his* Hands, and placing it in *their own*.

“ Nor does it alter the case, tho’ they
 “ should declare themselves to be *Vicegerents*,
 “ or *Law makers*, or *Judges*, under God,
 “ in order to carry on the ends of his King-
 “ dom. For it comes to this at last, since
 “ God does not think fit to interpose himself,
 “ so as to prevent or remedy all their Mi-
 “ stakes or false Judgments; that if they have
 “ a power of interpreting or adding Laws for
 “ the Government of civil Society, and of
 “ judging Men in such a sense, that they
 “ shall be obliged to obey those Laws and
 “ submit to their Decisions; then the King-
 “ dom, in which they rule, is not the King-
 “ dom of God, but of themselves. *He* doth
 “ not rule in it, but *they*. And whether they
 “ happen to agree with him, or to differ from
 “ him, without any interposition from him,
 “ either to guide or direct their Decisions,
 “ they are Kings of this Kingdom, and not
 “ the supreme God.

“ If therefore any Kingdom of this World
 “ be the Kingdom of God, it is essential to

“ it

“ it, that God himself should be the sole Law-
 “ giver, and sole Judge of his Subjects, in all
 “ points relating to the affairs of this World;
 “ and that all his Subjects, in what station
 “ soever they may be, are equally Subjects
 “ to him; and that no one of them, any
 “ more than another, hath *authority* to judge,
 “ censure, or punish the *Servant of another*
 “ *Master*, in matters relating purely to civil
 “ Life or Obedience.

“ If any Person hath any other notion,
 “ either through a long use of words, with
 “ *inconsistent* meanings, or through a *negli-*
 “ *gence of thought*, let him but ask himself
 “ whether the Kingdom of God be really the
 “ Kingdom of God or not: And if it be,
 “ whether this notion of it do not absolute-
 “ ly exclude all other *Legislators* and *Judges*
 “ in matters relating to civil Government;
 “ and whether it can be *his* Kingdom, if any
 “ mortal Men have such a power of *Legisla-*
 “ *tion* and *Judgment* in it.

If there be any force or consequence in
 this way of arguing, may we not now ap-
 peal to the common sense of mankind, whe-
 ther the most specious Reasons that have been
 urged against submission to authority in reli-
 gious Affairs, will not equally hold good, and
 upon the very same grounds, against all right
 or exercise of *civil* Authority?

The only remaining Plea, upon which any
 difference in the case can be pretended is,
 that

that except the Magistrate be invested with a power of making Laws, and of punishing the Contempt and Transgression of them, civil Society must in a short time necessarily dissolve. This very Reason, we say, does require that the Magistrate should have a power, in certain cases, of enforcing religious Doctrines by penal Sanctions, especially those Doctrines: And such are the Articles relating to a future State, and the Immortality of the Soul, that are necessary to the better order, well being, and government of the State.

So that whether we argue from the fallibility of Men, or the sovereign power of God, or the proper *ends* for which Society was instituted, the reasons of submission to Authority will indifferently hold, and with equal evidence in both cases. All attempts, therefore, which is the inference I would make, towards propagating atheistical or irreligious notions, which visibly tend to introduce confusion and disorder in any Government, are to be restrained, and upon the same general reason with treasonable designs directly formed against such Government.

And yet I am far from supposing as if we were obliged to submit implicitly to all human Establishments, whether respecting doctrinal Points, or the rules of Obedience in civil Life. I only contend for submission to Authority upon reasonable and solid grounds, and argue,

gue; that where good reasons do not appear to the contrary, Truth should be presumed upon a general consideration to lie on the side of Authority; that we do not therefore condemn a *free* and rational enquiry concerning any Doctrines publickly received or ratify'd, but only such an opposition to them, which is neither supported by good Reasons, nor regulated by the common measures of Decency; or which visibly discovers they are only *free* to think in a way agreeable to their Inclination, or perhaps to certain pre-conceived opinions on one side of the Question.

Where any Doctrine has universally obtain'd both among the more illiterate and knowing part of Mankind, a presumption concerning the truth of it is still more reasonable; as I have endeavour'd to shew in particular, from a consideration respecting the perfections of the divine Nature. A sense of Modesty should at least incline all persons to suppose, that Men who have had the greatest reputation for Wisdom and Knowledge, and who have examined things with due care and attention, were as capable as themselves of making a right Judgment concerning them: But a more special regard is still due to their Authority, where they are generally observed to concur in the same Sentiments.

Cicero, who loved to pursue his Researches so far as he could go, and had perhaps more reason to depend upon the Strength of his

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own Mind, than any Free-Thinker before his time, or since ; yet speaking of the Soul's Immortality, lays down this excellent Rule, *That in our disquisitions upon this Subject, we should consult the best Authorities, which usually have, and ought to have, in all cases, a very great weight* *.

He adds in the next Paragraph, that the consent of all Nations, in any opinion, is to be consider'd as the Law or Voice of Nature † ; which, if it may mislead us, or give an uncertain sound, there seems to be an end of all our reasoning at once from *natural* Principles.

Having premised what I thought proper by way of Introduction to the following Papers, I shall no longer detain the Reader, by making any Reflexions foreign to the Design or Subject of them.

* Auctoribus quidem, ad istam sententiam, uti possumus : Quod in omnibus causis & debet & solet valere plurimum. *Tusc. Quæst. Lib. 1. §. 12.*

† Omni autem in re, consensus omnium gentium lex naturæ putanda est.

C SIR,



SIR,

March 26. 1721.



Do not question but you have seen the *Epitaph*, which is in so many hands, composed by the late *Duke of Buckingham* for himself. After a Person of his distinguish'd Parts and Abilities has so ingenuously declared to the World how he conducted himself in respect to *moral Life*, and what his Sentiments were concerning certain *doctrinal* Points commonly received; I hope you will no longer reproach me with the character of a *Free-Thinker*. I shall not here repeat the Arguments employ'd by me in private conversation with you, to shew upon what grounds I go into that Distinction; and why, I think there is no necessity, that Divines, and other grave Writers, should press the duties of Morality with so much strictness and rigour, as if a reasonable Latitude might

might not be used in reducing them to practice, or they were rather calculated for the state of *Angels*, if there are really any such Beings, than for the state of frail Man, subject to so many Passions, and surrounded with an infinite variety of Temptations.

Neither shall I here resume the arguments urged by me, to shew that the grounds, upon which you profess to believe the Immortality of the Soul and a future State, are at the best precarious and uncertain, and such as are by no means sufficient to induce a rational and well-grounded Assent.

I would farther observe, that if possibly this Epitaph could be reconciled to the *received Doctrines* in other respects, yet it seems a clear and necessary Inference, that the noble Author of it was not perfectly orthodox, to use the common Dialect, in his belief of those *fundamental* Articles, as they are called, concerning the Divinity and Satisfaction of *Christ*.

Now, Sir, as you ever professed an extraordinary attachment to this great Man when living, you will think your self concerned to shew, if you can, that he has been unjustly charged by me, or rather indeed by the publick, in respect to the several foregoing Articles. But if you are not at leisure to examine, and give me your thoughts of them in particular, I desire however you would descend to consider the Article relating to the *Immorta-*

lity of the Soul, and a *future State*, in a more distinct manner; that being a point of general importance to Mankind, whether supposed in a state of natural or revealed Religion, and which, if I mistake not, has principally occasioned the Offence, which is said to have been taken by some persons of Piety and Learning at this Epitaph.

I desire, Sir, in prosecuting this Argument, you would produce your *strong Reasons*, if you have any, and those only. I shall have little regard to popular Notions, to the authority of great Names, or even, were you able to prove *that*, to *general consent*. I think the very instance before us sufficient to obviate all deductions of that kind. For tho', I grant, you have numbers, and, so far as we can argue from the visible profession of Men, a very great majority on your side, yet I take it, one good authority or great name against an Opinion commonly received, ought to have more weight than twenty authorities or great names in favour of it; especially where such an Opinion is pretended to serve the interests of Society better, or is thought more conducing to the advantage and happiness of particular Persons. In either of these cases we shall be more cautious, from a pure motive of Humanity and good Nature, how we disturb others in the quiet and peaceable possession of an error, if we really believe it so; which yet we shall be less apt to do, considering

ing how much interest and inclination usually govern our Belief. Have we not opportunities every day of observing, that Men are willing, I do not say for the sake of publick Good, but from mere private and personal regards in direct opposition to it, not only to dissemble their Principles, and retire out of the way, but even, on occasion, to make an open Sacrifice of them, when they are hard press'd by their Friends, or have some common Interest to secure. If the Tyes of Friendship, or any ordinary Alliance, are of sufficient force to produce effects of this kind, it will be much easier for Men, and at the same time reflect less Dishonour upon them, to conceal such Opinions, which are either of themselves prejudicial to the publick Interest, or are generally apprehended to be so.

But where a Sanction is not only given to any Doctrine by common Opinion, but by the authority of publick Laws, here the difficulty of opposing such Doctrine becomes much greater. Few Persons have the courage or resolution to advance notions against legal Establishments, which must of necessity expose them to publick Censure and Disgrace, tho' possibly they may for some time find means to elcape other *wholesome Severities*. When *Socrates*, who in that respect deserved the name of a *Free-Thinker*, had publickly declared himself against the ridiculous Worship and Theology of the *Athenians*, and
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was condemned to die for his offence against the established articles of religion, we are not to wonder that the great men after him out of a common principle of Self-preservation, were more cautious how they risked their reputation, their lives and fortunes, for the sake of any penal and openly decry'd Doctrine.

Tell me no more then of the most learned men, or the finest philosophical Wits, who have in all ages believed the doctrine of the Soul's immortality, and of a future State; except you can first shew, that they were not influenced in this belief by any human considerations, but embraced it upon truly solid and *philosophical* grounds.

What you have to urge from great numbers of learned men in the Church, especially, as you term it, of the sacerdotal Character, will still have less weight with me. It is the proper Business and Trade of Priests to assert and preach up these Doctrines; not only as they have been obliged to declare their assent and consent to them, under the notion of Doctrines *fundamental*, but as they are also of great use to inforce what they have to say in their harangues from the Pulpit, upon all other Heads. After a tedious, immethodical, and insipid Discourse, it is necessary in order to make some impression on the people, that Preachers should, in the conclusion at least, proceed to hold forth concerning the certainty, the greatness, the duration of Rewards and Punishments

Punishments to men after this Life, accordingly as they have here made a good or an ill use of their Liberty. This is the grand topick the common place of Preachers, where all the duties of Religion are commonly wound up and pressed upon the Audience, and without which the ordinary discourses from the Pulpit, would have very little power to move and affect them, or even to keep up a decent attention.

No argument certainly can be drawn from numbers to support a Doctrine, wherein there is so very great convenience, especially to illiterate and injudicious Preachers, who are not capable of giving any life or embellishment to their Discourses, from a due propriety of thought and expression, from a proper and easy method, or the common arts of persuasion employed by the best Orators.

You will conclude, Sir, from what I have said, that I expect nothing in answer from you, but in a way of strict Argumentation. Tho' I am an advocate for Free-Thinking, I would not be understood to be so, in the popular and abusive sense of the word; but so far only, as it imports a fair and impartial Examination of what is proposed to the understanding, according to evidence, and evidence only, whether produced in proof of any proposition, or against it.

But

Sir, you will excuse this address from one, who, tho' he has the Misfortune to differ from you in certain points, yet hopes, that his mind will ever be open to Conviction, and assures you it is for want of that only, he is forced at present to suspend his assent to the Article, upon which your thoughts are more particularly desired.

I am,

Yours.



RIS

*S I R,**March 27. 1721.*

Wish you had addressed yourself for Satisfaction, concerning the difficulties proposed in your Letter, to some person of more leisure and greater abilities. But since you have thought fit to consult me upon them, I take the first Opportunity of complying with your Request. What I design in the first place, is to convince you, if I can, that your judgment concerning the Epitaph which gave occasion of your writing to me, is precipitate and groundless; and that supposing, it were really well grounded, yet the consequences, which you would draw from it, will by no means follow in a just and strict way of Reasoning. When I have laid before you, what it may be proper for me to say in reference to these two Particulars, I shall examine whatever may deserve to be further considered

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in your Letter, with an impartiality, of which no *Free-thinker*, in the Sense according to which you declare yourself one, can have any pretence to complain.

I only desire, as to the first Article, this very reasonable Concession may be made to me, that the late Duke of *Buckingham* was capable of expressing himself *consistently*, and that he would be particularly careful to do so in an Inscription, composed by himself in order to be placed on his Monument. If this, and certainly no one can deny me the Benefit of it, be granted; and if I can shew, there is nothing in that Inscription, but what may be explained in a good sense, and what *ought* not to be otherways explained, supposing a due *consistency* in the several Parts of it: Then Sir, the conclusion will inevitably follow, that the censure, which you have passed upon it is rash, and withal highly injurious to the Memory of that noble Peer.

I shall not here descend to examine every Branch of this remarkable Epitaph, after a particular and distinct manner, but only consider those Articles of it, which are chiefly pretended to have given cause of offence, to some pious, learned and good men.

The Words,

Pro Rege saepe, pro Republica semper,

Which in a concise way of speaking agreeable to the lapidary Style, are designed to give us
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some Idea of the Maxims, by which this noble Lord conducted himself, in his political Capacity ; are properly no part of the Epitaph, being mentioned, as a distinct article from it. Neither do they admit of any ambiguous Sense, irreconcilable to the character of a true *Patriot* ; but only import, it was a standing principle of this great Man, on all occasions to assert the prerogative and powers of the Crown, where they were not extended so far, as to interfere with the just Liberties, or claims of Right in the People : So that it was the publick Good, in relation to which, he proposed *inviolably* to form and regulate his Measures. Whether he might possibly err on any emergency, in judging concerning the true Interests of the State, is not the thing in question ; tho' few persons had finer Talents for making a right Judgment in political Affairs, or a more exact knowledge of the characters, designs and schemes of the great Men in power at Court, to which he was always an Ornament. It is sufficient, if he happened on any occasion to be mistaken, that he continued still true to his principle, in a good and honourable Intention. Of this we have a signal instance, with respect to which the Age, wherein he lived, affords no superior Character, from the *Uniformity* of his Conduct, in opposing from time to time successively, thro' a course of many Years, and several Reigns, certain Designs, which he apprehended prejudi-

cial to the Cause he was known to espouse; and when, it is highly probable, all the common Topicks of Persuasion would be applied towards influencing a Person of his weight and distinction.

What seems to have occasioned one of the Reflexions most injurious to his Memory, is the following Declaration,

Dubius sed non improbus vixi.

Let us examine, with candour, whether these Words are not capable of a more favourable and human Construction than some Persons have been willing to admit.

There is a necessity from the very nature of the Opposition in these words, that we should interpret them, as having respect not to *Speculation*, but *Practice*, as denoting not properly any act of the Understanding or Judgment, but an act of Choice or Volition. So that *Dubius*, as oppos'd to *Improbis*, signifies a Person, not who disbelieves or entertains any doubt concerning the principles of Religion; but who, notwithstanding a rational and well grounded assent to them, does not yet make them the inviolable rule of his Conduct; or perhaps does not at all times actually attend to the force or Consequences of them: And therefore, during intervals of his not attending to them, it cannot be expected they should have any sensible Operation.

tion. If a Man's eye be never so quick or penetrating, yet it will no longer be of use to him, than while he opens it; the general power he has of distinguishing Objects by it, will not, if he keep it shut, direct him how he should walk, or preserve him from the danger of falling. The application is obvious to Men, who do not actually awaken in their minds the principles of Religion, to which they habitually assent, and by which they have really proposed to govern themselves.

At other times, when Men do in *fact* consult the Light, and discover in themselves a secret inclination to follow it, yet their endeavour to that end does not prove effectual, because in proportion as the religious motions excited in them are more strong, so is the force of Temptation: And it may so happen, that the power on this side may more than over-balance the weight on the other: Not that Temptation is really more powerful than the motives to our Duty, but by reason of the advantage which we incline to give it through some specious appearance of *Good*, or perhaps false taste of Pleasure.

Here is the original of all the practical errors in life that we commit, and which sometimes does even render Men, who live under a general sense of Religion, *dubious*, or unstable in their ways: So that they frequently fluctuate, as it were, between an irregular and a virtuous course of Life, sometimes deter-

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mining themselves one way, sometimes another, as they are more powerfully moved by Inclination, by Reason or Reflexion, by the weight of Concupiscence, or by the Love and Beauty of *Order*,

This, we grant, is an unhappy case, especially to those who too frequently neglect to chuse the *better* part. Yet there is nothing extraordinary in it, nothing but what in this frail and imperfect State is common to Men. We are not therefore uncharitably to conclude, that in such Persons, to whom this case does really happen, either the light of Reason, or the powers of Religion, are wholly extinct. A Man may act in many cases, and in repeated instances, against the conviction of his own mind, and yet preserve certain latent and good principles of Religion, which at other times may open and unfold themselves in a more virtuous and regular Conduct; which Principles, even at the instant of his committing certain Disorders or immediately after the commission of them, shall occasion to him a sensible anguish and regret of mind. However, since we cannot know the true state of a Man's Conscience in the sight of God, we are to judge by the rules of Candour and Charity concerning it, especially where he openly makes confession of his Guilt, or gives any visible testimony of his Repentance.

The great difficulty of considering these Words, as expressing a proper act of humiliation or repentance, arises from the opposition *sed non improbus* : For true penitents will think themselves concerned rather to aggravate their crimes than to use any expressions, which may appear to mollify, or extenuate them.

The answer to this difficulty lies in explaining what is meant by the Word *improbus*, which cannot here barely signify a person chargeable in the course of his Life, with many deviations from the rule of it; but one who is become in great measure, or wholly, insensible to the power and impressions of Religion; one, so lost to all sense of virtue, as neither to entertain any lively idea or love of it. We have scarce any word in English, which fully expresses the force of this term in the place where it stands before us, and yet is sometimes used by the best Authors. Now a person who in reflecting on his past Conduct, discovers that he has been guilty of a great many errors and escapes, ought indeed to humble himself under the conscious Report which his mind makes of them; but certainly no act of humiliation, can oblige any one to charge himself falsely, in a confession designed to inform the World, and late posterity, what his character and conduct really were, in respect to moral Life.

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Some Persons, for you are not singular in interpreting them to a wrong sense, have also taken offence at the following Words,

Incertus morior, sed inturbatus.

It cannot be dissembled, if this Declaration, should really import, that the Author of it was either diffident as to the Being of a future State, or to his particular Condition in it, no good or satisfactory, or rather, indeed no intelligible Construction could be put upon these Words; still supposing the account which this noble Lord gives of himself, to be rational and consistent.

We must therefore seek for some other sense of the Passage, and that I think may very naturally be deduced, to shew, that one of the finest Wits of the Age, wherein he lived, did not, in a composition design'd to transmit his character to future Ages, really *contradict* himself.

It is impossible, in the first place, that a person, upon the confines of Death, who is capable of any thought or reflexion, should be perfectly calm and undisturbed in his own Mind, whilst he is, at the same time uncertain, whether the Soul shall survive the Body, or if all the powers of Cogitation for which Life is only desirable, shall not expire at once, and for ever with the Body.

Uncer.

Uncertainty in the very nature of it implies suspense, and consequently in one degree or other some anxiety of Mind: An anxiety still heighten'd, when the things, concerning which we doubt, are such, as affect us in our nearest Interests, or on which our Happiness depends. Now, as there can be no happiness without Life, to say that a man is unconcerned, whether he shall live in a future State, or whether all the powers of life shall be finally extinct upon the dissolution of the Body, is to say, in other Words, that it is perfectly indifferent to such a person, whether after Death, he shall have a sense of happiness, or if he shall then become wholly, and to all intents and purposes insensible. It would be an affront to the common Ingenuity of mankind, to suppose any person capable of so very supine and unaccountable an Indolence, in the last moments of Life; neither can an uncertainty, as to the truth of a future State, consist with a profession made by a dying person of *Trust in God*.

For to trust in God, since we can only know him, and the grounds of our Trust in him, by his attributes, is to trust in his *Power* and *Justice*, in his *Wisdom* and *Goodness*. Now I shall endeavour to shew, when I descend to prove the immortality of the Soul, and to answer that part of your Letter, wherein you put me upon proving it, after a more distinct manner, that very strong and clear arguments

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may be drawn from these two last Attributes especially, in confirmation of this Doctrine.

But I here mention the divine attribute of Goodness in particular, as the noble Author of this Epitaph chose to express the strong and large Idea, which he had conceived of this attribute, by a Word*, which seems rather employ'd on account of its natural force and significancy, than to give us an instance of that elegancy and beauty of expression whereof he was confessedly one of the greatest Masters.

Now should a person acknowledge at the article of Death, that he believes himself to be an object of the divine Goodness, for otherways the divine Goodness could not be an object of his *Trust*, and yet should he be uncertain, at the same time, whether he has really any interest in the divine Goodness, or whether he shall be preserved a moment longer in Being, this would infer an inconsistent or rather a contradictory way of thinking, which could not well or rationally be supposed incident to any person even of common understanding.

Neither is it reconcileable with a calm and undisturbed temper of mind, upon the sensible approaches, or near prospect of Death, that a man should be uncertain, provided he

* Benevolentissimo.

really believe a future State, whether he shall be happy or miserable in it.

The desire of Being is so strong and invincible, that the very apprehension of ceasing to be, must necessarily give the mind of every reasonable Person some pain and uneasiness. But admitting, that we could be able perfectly to overcome this natural Desire, so that it might be considered as matter of pure indifference, whether we should continue to live, when the Body dies, or if all the powers and operations of Life, should from that moment intirely be destroyed: Yet when the question arises, whether, upon our changing the Scene of Life, we shall live in a state of Happiness or Misery; here all the passions, which have the greatest power to move us, must necessarily be excited, and render it impossible for us at the article of death, if we die as men *without hope*, to enjoy any true, or even any delusory peace and tranquillity of Mind.

And therefore where a person, in the last and concluding period of Life, professes himself easy and undisturbed at the thoughts of what may follow, charity obliges us to suppose, if we will allow such a person the ordinary use of Reason, that he believes himself to have some real and proper grounds of Confidence in the divine Goodness.

The uncertainty therefore, which this noble Lord here expressed, could not in a candid or

rational way of interpreting his Words be understood, either in respect to the truth of a future State, or to his particular condition in it.

We must therefore discover, if we can, some other meaning of the words, which is more intelligible, and this, if I mistake not, we may do, without putting the least force or constraint upon them.

Men, whose hopes are *full of immortality*, who not only believe the Soul shall survive the Body, but have well grounded assurances that their Condition in the other world shall be happy, are yet ignorant concerning the particular state and manner of Life proper to departed Spirits; they are uncertain into what distant Regions the Soul, when separated from the Body, shall be translated, and how in those invisible Societies, of which it is designed to form a part, it will act and converse. We know not, when we shall have no further commerce with those sensible Objects, which are here the instrumental causes of our Ideas, by what conveyance we can receive any Ideas; or what kind of sensations we may feel when we are wholly deprived of the present occasions and organs of Sense.

These are *Problems*, which cannot here be resolved by the wisest, or the best of Men. But as they only respect the manner of Life in a future State, and not the *truth* of the thing,

thing, they who have any true grounds of Trust in God, are freed from all *perturbation* of mind, on that account: Being in the hands of a *faithful Creator*, they commit the disposal of an event, concerning which they can have no certain knowledge, entirely to his Goodness; and acquiesce in it with the most perfect dependence, and resignation of Mind.

Another precarious inference which you have drawn from this Epitaph is, that the noble Author of it was not perfectly Orthodox in his Belief, concerning those fundamental articles, as you *ironically* style them, the *Divinity* and *Satisfaction* of Christ.

This charge I suppose is grounded on the Words,

Christum adveneror, Deo confido.

But you have not made the least Attempt to prove what is so boldly asserted, or to shew, that the words import a denial of these Articles, either directly or by just consequence. The word *adveneror*, which is found in very few Authors, ancient or modern, seems employ'd by his Lordship to give the greater force to what he would express; it is render'd by a very good Critick and Grammarian *, *valde*

* Æl. Ant. Nebriffensis.

veneror;

veneror ; it is apply'd by *Varro* * to signify an act of religious Worship : And yet is here interpreted, with equal candour by other persons and yourself, to import no more than a common act of Veneration, or of mere civil Worship. But there is no necessity of insisting upon the grammatical force of the Word. I acknowledge the belief of the Divinity and Satisfaction of *Christ* cannot necessarily be inferr'd from it, but neither does it, nor the following Confession (*Deo confido*) exclude the belief of these Articles. Whether his Lordship did really believe them, must depend upon other evidence ; and to those who do not know, that he made any formal Confession of his Faith concerning them, this evidence must be sought for in those sacred Records, which *Christ* bequeathed as the rule of Faith to his Church. And if the Divinity and Satisfaction of *Christ* are taught in the Scriptures, it is reasonably presumed that a person who constantly professed to believe the Scriptures, did believe these Doctrines ; tho' in an Inscription, the nature of which required brevity, he did not descend explicitly to declare his belief of them.

As to the Satisfaction of *Christ* in particular, or the atonement made to God by his death for the Sins of men, we have yet a more di-

* *Venerem & Minervam advenerari.*

rect evidence, that your charge on that head, against this noble person, is very unjust. He communicated regularly in that holy Sacrament, which was instituted in memory of our Lord's Death, and of the salutary effects derived to mankind by it, as has been attested in the Introduction: And, not long before his demise, he received the holy Communion, with those proper expressions of piety and devotion, which the nature of so solemn and sacred a Rite required. This was an act of religion, and one visible testimony of his believing the Christian Religion; which could not be attributed to any secular views or qualifications, but must in reason and charity be supposed to have flowed from an inward sense and conviction of Duty.

To shew what disposition some persons, out of their great humanity were in, to fix the worst sense upon this Inscription, they made no scruple in several copies that were dispersed abroad, to add to the original Text, *Deo confido*, by inserting the word *solo*; which had been indeed more exclusive of our Lord's Divinity, but not *absolutely* so: For it cannot be justly inferr'd that any person does not believe in *Christ*, as *God*, from an expression which yet may properly be used on supposition, that *Christ* is really God.

The concluding words, *Ens Entium miserere mei*, are a pious and humble address
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for mercy to the supreme Deity, the original Fountain, from which all other Beings derive. The variation of the Terms in *Aristotle's* Prayer, when he was upon the point of expiring, does not make the least difference in the sense. This Philosopher, if we may credit *Cælius Rhodiginus*, upon his Death bed, supplicated * for Mercy to the *first Cause* after a more intense manner: Which words may either refer to the frequent repetition he made, according to some authorities of this Prayer, or to the fervent manner and extraordinary emotions wherewith he was observed to deliver it. Either of these senses are proper to shew, that this great Genius, at a time when Men are supposed the least capable of dissembling their Sentiments, has left us a considerable testimony of his Belief concerning the existence of the Soul in a future State; for what is supposed not to *be* or *exist*, cannot be an object of the divine Mercy. I shall take the liberty to observe from the same Author, that the friends of this Philosopher, who assisted in his last moments, had the same Sentiments, which they express'd after a very full and distinct manner in the following Prayer recommendatory to the supreme Being. † *May he who takes to him-*

* Proditum primæ causæ misericordiam intentius implo-
rasse. *Tom. 2. L. 17. C. 34.*

† Qui philosophorum animas excipit & tuam colligat.
Tom. 2. Lib. 18. C. 31.

self the Souls of departed Philosophers receive thy Soul.

Sir, if I have erred in this occasional defence of a noble Lord, distinguished by many shining and superior Talents, or in any part of it, my error has been on the charitable side; and I shall humbly submit every thing I have said to correction, especially where it may proceed from a zeal for Religion, so fervent, as I know it to be in some persons who have taken distaste at this Epitaph. I would not, upon any motive whatever, be chargeable with designing the least prejudice or disservice to the cause of true Piety: But we are obliged by all the rules of Candour and common Ingenuity to put the most favourable construction on the words, as well as on the actions of Men, which they will reasonably bear. And the obligation we are under of conforming to those rules is still more powerful, where we are to speak the sense of those persons who are no longer capable of speaking for themselves.

I have endeavoured, Sir, to shew that your judgment concerning this Inscription is groundless and precipitate; but admitting you had really better grounds for it, and that I have not been able fully to evince what I proposed, yet the consequences which you have pretended to deduce in your Letter, would by

no means follow in a just or strict way of reasoning.

First, You infer from the conduct of this noble Peer, in respect to *moral Life*, that I ought not reproach you with the character of a Free-Thinker, or rather, as you explain your self upon this Article afterwards, of a *Free-Liver*. “ For you are of opinion there “ is no necessity that Divines and other grave “ Writers should press the duties of Morality “ with so much strictness and rigour, as if a “ reasonable latitude might not be used in reducing them to practice; or they were rather calculated for the state of Angels, if “ there are really any such Beings, than for “ the state of frail Man subject to so many “ Passions, and surrounded with an infinite “ variety of Temptations.

According to this way of reasoning, you think it may be, in the first place, of particular service towards excusing the Latitude which you contend for in human Life, if you can produce the examples of Men eminent for any extraordinary qualities in favour of a more loose Morality.

If there be any weight in this Argument, you ought to shew, that example, in certain cases, may reasonably obtain against plain and direct precept; or that a deviation from a known and standing Rule is rather to be followed, especially after a *great Man*, than the Rule it self.

There is no Crime or Impiety in the world but what may be justify'd in this method of arguing, which yet, among all other distinctions of Men, does certainly least become the character of a *Free-Thinker*, with whom it is pretended to be a standing and fundamental Law, in no case to admit of Authority for Reason, much less when it is urged in direct opposition to Reason, or any reasonable Rule. And yet here, because Authority seems to give some countenance to a more licentious and irregular way of living, you *cite* it without any other reason, and against the common reason and sentiments of the wisest and best of Men in all Ages.

Why should Examples only have influence, or deserve to be imitated, when they favour Corruption, and not when they are alledged to recommend Virtue and Piety to the world? which are confessedly, setting aside all moral obligations to them, most conducive to the true Happiness of mankind, consider'd in all their relations and capacities. It is an admirable rule of *Cicero**, and very applicable to the present occasion, which I shall lay before you, and leave without any Comment, *that* we ought in forming a judgment concerning things, to consider the most perfect and ex-

* Specimen cujusque naturæ capi decet ab optimâ quâque naturâ. *Tull. Tuscul. Quæst. Lib. 1. §. 18.*

cellent Qualities conspicuous in things of the same kind.

Yet when we say that the rules of Virtue and Piety are, in the nature of them, reasonable, it does not therefore follow that all reasonable Beings, or even that all wise Men, will inviolably regulate their words or actions by them. Man is here in a state, not of confirmed Sanctity, but of Probation; capable of making a good or an ill use of his Liberty. Would he always resolve to follow Reason, he would always chuse the *better part*. But there are other powerful springs of action, whereby he is frequently moved against the clear light and conviction of Reason; and which are still more powerful, in proportion to the vivacity and extent, the strength and delicacy of his Imagination. If, on one hand, Persons of fine and great capacities are justly presumed to see the truths of Religion, and the motives to practice in a stronger Light, it must be granted they are on the other side more liable in certain instances to the force of Temptation, and sometimes in circumstances of Life, which more expose them to the danger of it.

I do not, Sir, speak this with the least design of extenuating those Disorders, into which persons of the finest Talents are sometimes observed to fall. The conclusion ought certainly to lie the other way, that in proportion

portion to the advantages which men owe to Nature, to Education, or Fortune, they are obliged to make the more sensible returns of gratitude and duty to him in whose hands the direction of every Cause and Event does originally lye, and who distributes his favours to whom, and in what measure he pleases.

But whether men do or do not act in pursuance of so many peculiar and powerful obligations to obedience; there is no difficulty in determining, whether we ought to model our own conduct by their example when they live up, as order requires, to their rule, or when they visibly depart from it.

If *Divines and other grave Writers*, have prescribed any rules of Life to men, which the supreme Law-giver has not prescribed; or if they have extended any duty beyond those bounds, within which he has circumscribed them, there would then be some force in your argument against such writers; and they must answer to it, as well as they can, for themselves: The honour and truths of religion are not concerned in the errors or false conclusions of any person, whether they proceed from weakness, from ignorance, or an *indiscreet Zeal*.

While Divines, to confine my self to them, regulate their instructions by the standard of moral truth, for that is the subject of our present inquiry; I challenge you to shew, that
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they have prescribed either a rule of life in general, or any particular Duty, which, all things considered, is not proper to the state and condition of men, in their present circumstances.

Should any rules of morality be laid down, which are against reason, you would certainly have very good reason, both to be against such rules, and against the authors of them. But so long as men endeavour to set the true rules of moral Life in a proper light, and to enforce them, upon the conscience, by proper arguments, it is irrational to plead an exemption from those rules, or from any of them; it is to employ reason against the very Nature and *Constitution* of reasonable Beings.

There is no way to excuse an irregular course of Life, or any one action in breach of the moral Law, but by proving, that the rules of morality are either unreasonable in themselves, or with respect to men in general, or to particular persons, under their present Circumstances. And if you can produce convincing proofs to this end in these several respects, or in any of them, I promise to join with you in condemning not only the strictness and rigour, but the unreasonableness of those Maxims which have been constantly taught and recommended by the best divines, and moral writers, in the world.

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But men, you say, are not to be consider'd, as in the state of angels, if *there are really any such Beings*. It is not necessary to inquire here concerning the truth of their Existence: It is sufficient to break the force of your argument, to say, that the Laws here calculated for men are proper to the present State, in the several relations and capacities of men. If we are surrounded with variety of temptations, we have at the same time, whatever their number may be, a Principle, a Light, a *Monitor* within us, which if duly attended to, will shew us a way to escape, and how we may improve the conflicts to which we are exposed, into so many noble occasions of victory and triumph.

We do not deny, that the temptations incident to men in this world, are both very strong and numerous; but we say, there is a law in our Minds, an inward principle of common Grace at least, (if you will not admit the special motions of the holy Spirit) which, if we would apply it as we ought, would be an excellent preservative of our Innocence. The most profligate Sinner will not deny, that he sometimes finds in himself certain good and pious Motions, so powerfully excited, that he cannot easily stifle the force of them. There is a still, but distinct voice, which if we will attend to it, speaks continually within us, but sometimes tells us after a
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more audible and awakening Manner, *this is the Way, walk in it.*

Secondly, On occasion of what you have unjustly observed concerning the sentiments of this noble Lord in respect to certain Doctrines commonly received, you insinuate, as if his Authority, at the same time you are pleading against the use of authority in matters of speculation, were yet of considerable force towards overthrowing the doctrine of the Soul's immortality : For you assert, that the instance before us is sufficient to obviate all arguments in proof of this Doctrine, from the authority of great names, or, even were we able to prove *that*, from general Consent. And the reason you give, is, " tho' we have, *by your* " *Concession*, numbers, and so far as we can " argue from the visible profession of men, a " very great majority on your side, yet one " good authority or great name against an " opinion commonly received, is of more " weight *with you*, than twenty authorities " or great names against it ; especially, *you* " *add*, where such an opinion is pretended to " serve the interest of Society better, or is " thought more conducing to the advantage " and happiness of particular persons".

I. According to this way of arguing, there can be no judgment or evidence admitted in any case, where men have a publick Interest to serve ; that is, where they act upon the
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most generous and noble principle, by which human actions are capable of being influenc'd. Your argument indeed is so far from being an objection against the doctrine of the Soul's immortality, that, the very Concession, upon which it proceeds, is of great force to induce all persons who have any just Notion concerning the divine Attributes, to believe it. For what can be more irreconcilable to the idea of infinite perfection, than to suppose that God has made men sociable Creatures, and yet that the most happy and beneficial ends of Society cannot be attained, but upon supposition at the same time, that he has obliged all mankind to make *wrong judgments*, and even rendred it necessary, towards effecting those *Ends, that they should believe a Lye?*

So that whatever your private Sentiments are as to this doctrine, there cannot possibly be a more evident consequence, than that you ought, at least to keep them to your self, both out of reverence to almighty God, and a decent regard to the common good and interests of Mankind, if you are really influenced by either of these Considerations.

It appears then, that the very reason by which you endeavour to support your Argu-

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ment militates against it ; except perhaps you will seek to evade what has been said, by replying, tho' it is on some accounts for the common interest of mankind, that they should believe the immortality of the Soul, yet in other respects it would be *beneficial* to them, that this Doctrine should not be believed. Now if I should suppose, what for many reasons I ought not to grant, that the appearances of interest are really equal on both sides of this Question, then your argument against the authority of great Names from a consideration of interest, would conclude nothing. So that numbers on one side, especially where there is a general Consent, and there is no sensible difference between the capacities of men, ought still to have some Weight. For the motives of interest being now out of the question, it is justly presumed, that where men are equally capable of examining into the nature and reason of things, the Truth will be discovered on that side on which it generally appears to lye ; otherways this inconvenience, which would put an end to all our researches after truth at once, will unavoidably follow, *that* God has given certain faculties, and powers of cogitation to Mankind, which serve only in general, to *deceive* and *mislead* them.

Sir, I have here given your argument all the force, whereof it seems capable; I have supposed, contrary to the faith and credit of all History, if we may believe the characters of the great men of Antiquity recorded in them, that they who denied the doctrine of the Soul's immortality were of equal authority consider'd in their personal Capacities, with those who asserted it: Should this be granted, I have yet shewed, for a reason respecting the honour, the wisdom and goodness and veracity of the supreme Being, that your argument against general Consent, would be of no consequence.

But there is no necessity after all, why I should make any such Concession in your favour. Produce, if you are able, any names of Antiquity on your side, equal to those of *Plato* and *Aristotle*, of *Tully* and *Seneca*. I do not barely mention them as persons of extraordinary Learning and Capacity, (there have been some atheistical Wits eminently distinguished in these two respects,) but I consider them properly as *Free-Thinkers*, in that good sense, whereof the word, however abused and perverted to serve ill principles, is really capable. I consider them as men, who in their search after Truth proceeded in a rational Method,

and with those good dispositions, which were most proper to bring them at last to the place of her habitation.

It must be acknowledg'd, that *Aristotle* was neither so clear nor so copious in asserting the immortality of the Soul, as his master *Plato*, so far as we can judge from the writings of this Philosopher, which have been transmitted to us. Yet to say nothing more, as to the testimony already mentioned, relating to the circumstances of his Death, there are several passages in his works, which sufficiently discover what his real opinion was, concerning this fundamental article of natural religion. I shall satisfy myself with observing to you, at present, what may very justly be inferr'd from one of them: In his first Book of *Ethicks*, where he speaks concerning the offices of Friendship, he makes it a question, whether our dead Friends are really affected with the good or ill fortune here incident to us; and resolves, that notwithstanding they are in some measure differently moved at the notice they receive of our present condition, according to our different Circumstances; yet they are not moved to such a degree, as either on one hand to suffer pain, if they are really happy, or to enjoy any sensible pleasure on the other, if they are consigned

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to a state * of Misery: An ample testimony not only of this Philosopher's belief concerning the existence of departed Spirits, for otherways he would neither have proposed so chimerical a Question, nor resolved it after such a manner, but which may be farther improved to shew, that he also believed a future State of retribution; of reward to the good, and of punishment to wicked Men.

I think, Sir, your argument against authority in respect to the Article under consideration, has now been sufficiently answer'd; I shall but make this one observation more upon it, that if we are to have no regard to any man's Judgment, where he appears to consult the common benefit of mankind, in making it, you ought not for that very reason, and upon your own Principles, to argue against the immortality of the Soul, or to call it in question. For the only ground upon which you can possibly be conceived to proceed in such an Inquiry is, that hereby you may be more instrumental towards promoting the general good of Mankind, in freeing them, to speak in the dialect of that Fraternity, from the

* Ως μὴ ποιεῖν δαίμονας τὰς μὴ οὐκ, καὶ τὰς οὐκ μακάρις ἀφαιρῆναι τὸ μακάριον. Eth. Lib. I. c. II.

flavish impressions of Religion, and from those restraints of their Liberty, which the Doctrine of a future account to be given of their Actions is supposed to lay upon them.

It was upon this ground *Epicurus* was so industrious in propagating his atheistical Hypothesis. And *Lucretius* thought the benefits derived to Mankind by that Canal so great and extensive, as to give this Philosopher a claim to Divinity*.

What I have said may be indifferently applied towards shewing the inconsistency of your Argument, in respect to the *interest* of particular Persons. For if good Men are more inclined to believe the Soul immortal, from a prospect of that Happi-

* Dicendum est *Deus* ille fuit, *Deus*, inclite Memmi,
Qui princeps vitæ rationem invenit eam, quæ
Nunc appellatur sapientia; quique per artem,
Fluctibus è tantis vitam, tantisque tenebris,
In tam tranquillo, & tam clara luce locavit. *Lucr.* l. v. v. 8.
Veridicis ergo purgavit pectora dictis,
Et finem statuit cuppedinis atque timoris. *Lucr.* l. vi. v. 23.

It is probable that Cicero, in the first Book of his Tusculan Questions, may refer to this particular Passage, where he has the following Words.

Qui naturæ cognitionem admirantur, ejusque inventori & principi gratias exultantes agunt, atque venerantur ut Deum: Liberatos enim se per eum dicunt gravissimis Dominis, Terrore sempiterno, & diurno ac nocturno, Metu.

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ness with which they shall be rewarded for the due and regular use they have here made of their Liberty, it will on the other hand be for the *advantage* of wicked Men, that the Doctrine of a future State should not prove true, to the end they may escape the punishment, which they apprehend on supposition of such a State, would be justly consequent to their evil Actions. This is * the very Reason assign'd by *Hierocles* why a wicked Man wisheth all the powers of Life may be extinct when the Body dies, that the Soul after death may not be reserved for a state of Punishment. Now considering, Sir, how much our inclination, as you observe, usually governs our belief, while there is so much wickedness and corruption in the world, there is less difficulty in accounting for the growth of Infidelity whether in regard to this, or other fundamental articles of Religion.

But you add, “ Where a sanction is not
 “ only given to any Doctrine by common
 “ opinion, but by the authority of public
 “ Laws, there the difficulty of opposing
 “ such Doctrine becomes much
 “ greater.

* ἢ καὶ ἀπομνήνη τιμωρίας.

What you would insinuate is, that the awe of Authority being so great, Men will be naturally inclined to determine, in all controverted Points, on that side, for which the Laws in *being* declare; that a particular deference therefore is to be paid to the judgment of those generous and publick-spirited Persons, who have the courage to dispute Doctrines which are once passed into legal Establishments. Such persons too in your opinion highly deserve, and on the same account, to be honoured.

Let us apply this Argument to the Doctrine of the Soul's Immortality, which, by one means or other, it is not necessary to enquire *how*, having obtained an Establishment; they, you think, who have the resolution to oppose it, are for that very reason, and upon a general consideration, presumed to have the advantage on their side. For it cannot well be presumed that any one will oppose Authority to his visible Disadvantage, and perhaps his Disgrace, without being able to shew some very reasonable and good cause for his opposition.

This may appear, at first view, a plausible Argument; but there lie certain exceptions to it, which will easily discover it to be fallacious and inconclusive.

I. It

1. It is here insinuated, contrary to what may be presumed upon much better grounds, that private persons are more competent judges of any disputable or controverted Point, than publick communities of Men, deliberating or acting in a *legislative* Capacity.

2. Another false ground, upon which this Argument proceeds, is, that Men are seldom or never supposed to act in opposition to their secular Interests; and especially in cases which may affect their honour or reputation. Nothing can be more contrary to this Supposition, than what is every day observed to happen in fact; and whatever will happen while there are other springs of human action, from vanity or resentment, from opiniatry or a spirit of opposition, which on many occasions operate with so great force in some Men, that no regard either to their interest or reputation is able to overcome it.

3. Your Argument supposes, that because Men appear, upon principle, to incur certain temporal Inconveniencies, and perhaps some degree of publick Reproach, that they are therefore really sincere and

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disinterested. But how often does it happen that a strict regard to their Interests does render it necessary Men should at least appear to depart from them; nay, that they should even visibly give up a real and present Interest in prospect of a greater in reversion: That by the merit and notoriety of the Sacrifice, they may recommend themselves more effectually to the favour of those who have the engines of power in their hands, and in whom their hopes terminate.

So that till we can discover what the secret passions and views of Men are, what puts them in motion, and for what ends they act, there is no concluding with certainty that they really act, after all, either from a conviction of Truth, or upon a real principle of Sincerity; especially, and that sometimes happens to be the case, where obvious reasons may be given for their conduct respecting the present interests of Life.

The truth then, other circumstances being equal, is still presumed to lye on the side of Authority and publick Laws: And I would be understood to argue with that Limitation; for I am not contending in any case, for authority against reason, but only maintain, that where no reason appears a-
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gainst authority, in that case there is more weight and stronger presumptions of Truth from publick Sanctions, than from the opinion of particular Persons ; that no opposition therefore made to such Sanctions is of any farther account or consideration, than it is supported by good Reasons.

To illustrate what I say, by your own instance, it was not because *Socrates* in his time opposed the Doctrines publicly received and established at *Athens*, that his authority, absolutely considered, was of more force to persuade, than the authority of the State ; but because he opposed those Doctrines upon clear, persuasive, and truly philosophical Grounds.

When you can produce a Parallel equal to that great Man, in the strength and evidence of his testimony to the truth, I shall readily allow such an authority, but such an authority only, to be of equal weight, towards overthrowing any erroneous Doctrine, whatever Sanction may be given to it, either by common opinion, or by the publick Laws.

Having observed what I thought proper, upon your argument relating to authority ; I should now proceed to prove directly, and after a distinct manner, the Doctrine of
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the Soul's immortality: But I have already enlarged so much in my reflexions, that I must reserve this point for the Subject of a following Letter. I am,

S I R,

Yours.

F I N I S.

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